

News from Ed Markey

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CONTACT: DAVID MOULTON

(202)225-2836

MARKEY RELEASES KENAI REFUGE DETERMINATION THAT OIL AND GAS ACTIVITIES "NOT COMPATIBLE"

*Lawmaker also cites "regrettable history" detailed in
contamination assessment at Kenai*

Washington, DC: Rep. Edward Markey today, in response to oil industry attempts to portray oil and gas development as "compatible" with wildlife protection, released two documents demonstrating that what the industry defines as compatible differs widely from what is legally required under the 1966 Refuge Act. Markey focused on the Kenai Refuge in Alaska because a prominent pro-drilling oil industry lobbyist in Washington, DC -- Roger Herrera of Arctic Power -- bragged in news reports that oil and gas activities at Kenai represent "a very clear example" of the compatibility of oil work and wildlife.

"Kenai is the oil industry's Achilles heel," said Markey. "Every fallacy in the industry's argument can be found bubbling on the surface of that refuge. Kenai has been the subject of two, thorough, objective assessments within the last two years that expose the slick arguments of the drilling lobby for all to see."

The two documents are 1.) the September 1999 Compatibility Determination for the Kenai Refuge and 2.) the January 2001 Kenai National Wildlife Refuge Contaminant Assessment. Both documents were issued by the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service, which manages the National Wildlife Refuge System.

1. OIL AND GAS ACTIVITIES DEEMED INCOMPATIBLE WITH KENAI REFUGE: The Compatibility Determination was issued by the Kenai refuge manager and concurred by the assistant regional director for southern Alaska, the assistant regional director for refuges and wildlife, and the regional director. It specifically applies to all those subsurface mineral rights on the refuge owned by the federal government, and comments on the effect on wildlife of the private activities that are ongoing but which were initiated prior to the passage of the 1966 Refuge Act. It concluded that **"the use has been determined to be not compatible with the purposes of the Kenai National Wildlife Refuge,"** based on the following:

1. 524.4 acres of wildlife habitat lost due to drill pads, facilities and roads
2. 424.3 acres of wildlife habitat lost due to access roads, pipelines, powerlines and other infrastructure
3. 24 human-caused fires attributed to oil development
4. 874 miles of traditional bulldozed seismic trails, resulting in illegal ATV use causing additional habitat damage, erosion, illegal take of wildlife and wildlife disturbance.
5. Chronic spills of fuel and hydraulics fluids used in modern 3-D seismic techniques, accompanied by blow-outs from drill holes and significant littering.
6. 13 spills a year at Swanson River, totaling 452 gallons of diesel, 65 gallons of methanol, 12745 gallons of crude oil, 2213 gallons of triethylene glycol, 21525 gallons of produced water, 100 gallons of solvents, 85 gallons of hydraulic fluid, and 35 gallons of antifreeze.

7. \$40 million remediation project of 107,000 tons of PCB-contaminated soil.
8. Multiyear ongoing remediation of large but unknown quantity of xylene released at the Swanson River Pipe and Supply Yard.
9. 4 spills per year at Beaver Creek, including 400 gallons of diesel, 31 gallons of methanol, 3000+ gallons of crude oil, 163 gallons of produced water, 3 gallons of hydraulic oil, 3 gallons of motor oil and 2 gallons of Perolite.
10. Major contamination events involving oil spills, compressor plant explosions, gas blow-outs, chronic leaking of organic compounds, flare stack and tank setting contamination, flow line leaks or breaks, spills from tanker loading.
11. Routine non-reporting of spills both large and small.
12. Noise from drilling operations, compressor plants truck traffic and construction that carries for miles through the wilderness.
13. Air pollution from flaring, road dust, road kill, gravel extraction, buried reserve pit waste and landfills, poaching of wildlife.

2. OIL AND GAS ACTIVITIES ARE THE PRIMARY CAUSE OF CONTAMINATION IN KENAI REFUGE: The Contaminant Assessment inventoried the known and potential contamination threats of all kinds to the refuge. It elaborated on the problems of oil and gas activities enumerated in the Compatibility Assessment and highlighted that many of these spills went unnoticed for several years to decades. They determined that **“the primary source of spills and contamination events for Kenai NWR are related to oil and gas development”** and their main concerns with oil and gas development included the following:

1. Unnoticed contamination events
2. Aging flowlines and drain lines
3. Spill potential along oil field roads
4. Vulnerability of Swanson River and Beaver Creek to spill events
5. New oil and gas development

The executive summary of the Contaminant Assessment notes that:

“Although many people think of Alaska as an untouched wilderness – the last frontier, Alaska is not immune to contaminant problems. In fact, its remoteness has contributed to its contaminant burden. Even the National Wildlife Refuges in Alaska are not impervious to contaminant threats, and many of them have significant and regrettable contaminant histories.”

“These two documents show that oil and gas activities are not compatible with the mission of wildlife refuges and we will only add to this ‘regrettable’ history should we pursue oil and gas development of the Arctic Refuge,” Rep. Markey concluded.

The Compatibility Determination for the Kenai National Wildlife Refuge is available at www.house.gov/markey/iss_arctic.htm and the Kenai National Wildlife Refuge Contaminant Assessment report is available at www.r7.fws.gov/es/cap.html.

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